

New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario
Sunday, September 11, 2016
Rev. Andrew Reid
Revelation 3:20-22; Psalm 139:1-12; Luke 15:1-10
“Opening the Door”

Part 1

William Holman Hunt was an artist who died over 100 years ago in England. When he was a young man, about 150 years ago, he painted a painting called *The Light Of The World*. Actually, he painted the scene more than once. It has become a very famous painting.

It shows a dark night. Jesus is holding a lamp in his hand – *‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’* John 8.12. Jesus has his hand raised. He is knocking on a door that looks as if it hasn't been opened in a long, long time – *Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me* Revelation 3:20.

There is something strange about the door. Before I tell you what the strange thing is, I wonder if anyone can see what it is. Because we don't have a copy of the painting here in New St James – at least not an actual painting, but we do have a stained glass window that shows the scene. I'd like the children to come with me so that we can look at it together . . .

So what is the strange thing about the painting? Look at the door. It looks as if it hasn't been opened for a long time, but how would you open it if you were standing there with Jesus?

You couldn't. There is no handle on the outside of the door. Only someone who is on the other side, inside the house, can open the door to let Jesus come in.

One of the things that this painting teaches us is that Jesus doesn't force himself into our lives. He waits till we open our lives up to him, and then he comes in, and stays with us forever. *‘Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.’*

Go back to your seats and think about that for a moment as we hear the choir sing.

Part 2

There is another way to think about that picture. I had never thought about it this way until I read it somewhere recently. I was sure it was in the book that some of us are studying right now, *12 Keys to an Effective Church*. But when I tried to find it yesterday, I couldn't find it. No matter. This is the other way to think about that picture.

Yes, we need to open the door so that Jesus can come in and stay with us. He can't open it for us. We must do it ourselves.

But we also need to open the door so that we can come out and follow Jesus. Because that is what he asks us to do. It's the very same thing that he asked people to do that we read about in the Bible. He said it to Simon Peter and Andrew and Matthew and all the others – two simple words: *Follow me* Matthew 4:19, 9:9.

And he waits for us to come out and follow him. Just as he waits for us to open the door so that he can come in and stay with us, so he waits for us to come out and follow him.

Which is exactly what we are doing when we worship God and when we show God's love to the people we meet every day.